BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON
ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

SERVING BC's EDUCATION SYSTEM

Resolving Conflicting Views of Transfer Effectiveness

2nd Biennial Conference on Articulation & Transfer
Policies and Practices in Transfer: Putting the Pieces Together
July 28-29, 2003
Tampa, Florida

Frank Gelin, Executive Director & Co-Chair, BCCAT
Finola Finlay, Associate Director, BCCAT

BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON
ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

SUPPORTING BC's EDUCATION SYSTEM

MANDATE (1989):

to provide leadership and direction in facilitating articulation, transfer, and admission arrangements between the College and Institute system and the University sector.

How is our mandate achieved?

105-04508/

By engaging in activities that:

- → **focus on *establishing and maintaining values* that are supportive of a system that enables and supports student mobility between autonomous institutions**
- → **keep admissions and transfer issues high on the agenda of institutions**
- → **establish effective and efficient transfer mechanisms**
- → **evaluate the effectiveness of transfer policies and practices**

1995: The Conflict Revealed

Context:

- Recently elected government making its mark!
- An activist college faculty in a strong position of influence!!
  - who assert that the universities hold excessive power in establishing articulation agreements
- An unexamined anecdotal record of transfer problems!!!
- A senior government official knows someone who claims to have had a transfer problem!!!!
- New strategic plan for college sector (universities excluded)
  - based on advice from confidential planning committee!!!!!

1996: The Strategic Plan

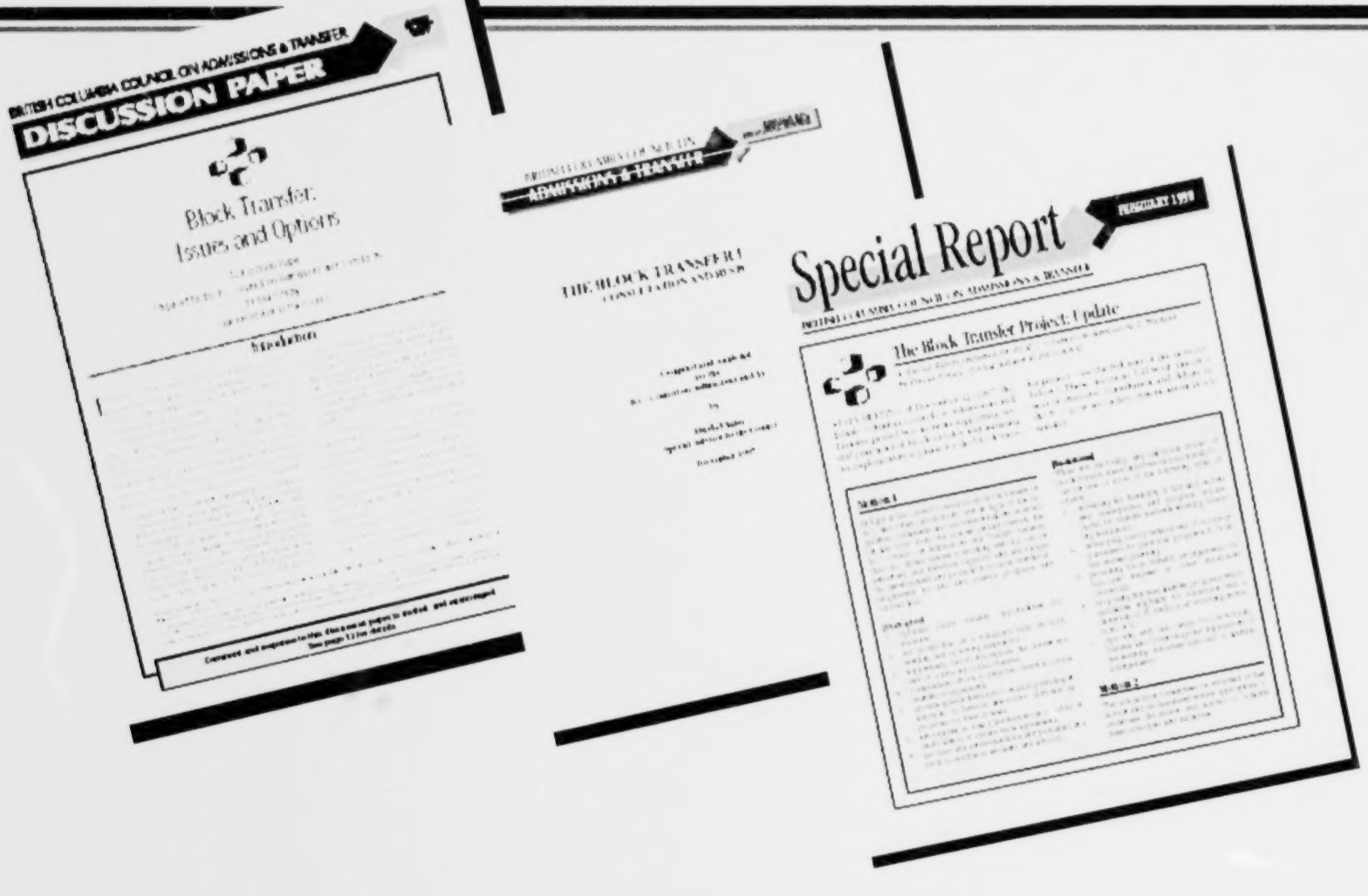
"Charting a New Course"

"Block transfer agreements will be developed to allow transfer agreements between institutions and eliminate the time consuming process of course-by-course institutional credit assessment."

So what did we do?

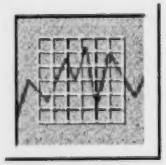
- **Formulated a plan to assess the underlying assumption that the transfer system needed fixing**
- **Implemented <u>comprehensive system-wide</u> consultation**

Consultation Process

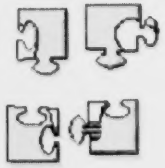


Then what?

- Announced our own conclusions



- Developed a research agenda to inform, evaluate, and direct future plans



- Identified a range of initiatives to enhance transfer

Council motion
(December 1997)

In light of our research on block transfer and the responses, comments, recommendations received we:

- ***believe the current system is working well but can be enhanced***
- ***support and encourage the development and promotion of block transfer arrangements that***
  - ***supplement, but do not replace, the current system of course-by course transfer agreements***
  - ***provide greater flexibility in enabling sending institutions to develop innovative curricular approaches to the curriculum***
  - ***are clear and understandable and published in a form accessible to students and advisors.***

Research Approaches

- **Survey of Advising and Admissions Personnel**
- **Transfer Student Profile Reports**
- **Student Surveys**
- **Student Interviews**
- **Transcript Assessment Studies**

(Annotated Bibliography of all BCCAT Research **and detailed reports are available online)**

Survey of Advising and Admissions Personnel (1997)

- **Questionnaire mailed to admissions and advising personnel in colleges and universities**

  Examples of questions:

  - **In advising transfer students, how would you rate the value of the following: current transfer guide, on-line guide, institutional catalogues, program brochures, personal contacts at receiving institutions, your own knowledge of unpublished or difficult to find regulations or info, etc.?**
    - **(great value, some value, no value, unknown)**
  - **What information or sources (if any) have you found to be unhelpful, flawed or erroneous? Please give specific examples of each.**

Survey of Advising and Admissions Personnel (1997)

- What information or resources would be potentially helpful/valuable to transfer students and their counselors/advisors?
- In your experience, how would you rate the level of knowledge students intending to transfer have about the transfer process in BC?
- Based on your experience, what percentage of students would you estimate transfer successfully, and encounter no difficulties with the process? Minor difficulties? Major difficulties?
- What kind of minor difficulties or irritants have you personally observed? Check all that apply.
- What kind of major difficulties or irritants have you personally observed? Check all that apply.

Survey of Advising and Admissions Personnel (1997)

- **Key Findings:**

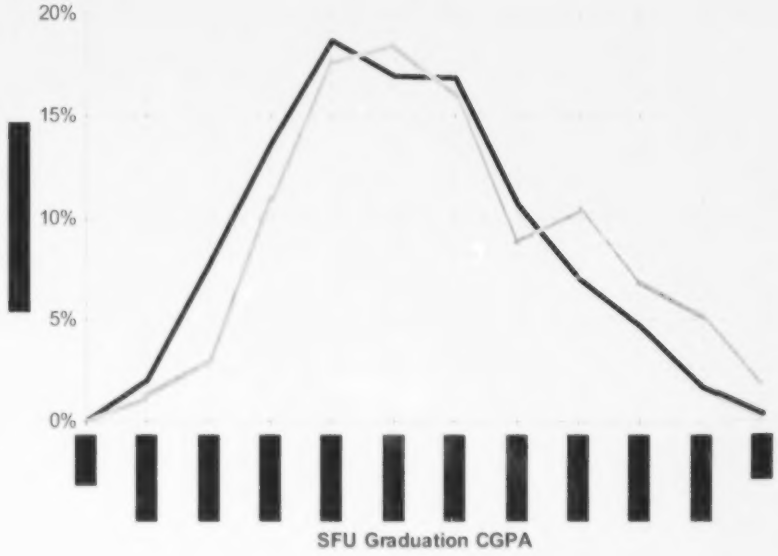
1. **The most "potentially" valuable resource in the advising process was:**
   a) **An online transfer guide**
   b) **Clearly defined appeals processes**
   c) **User friendly student transfer handbook**
   d) **A "Transfer Liaison Officer" at receiving institutions**
2. **Most students do <u>not</u> have a good understanding of the transfer system**
3. **27% of students estimated to experience minor difficulties with the transfer process; 9% with major difficulties**
4. **90% rated system good (55%) or pretty good (35%)**
5. **Many helpful and constructive suggestions for improvements**

Transfer Student Profile Reports

- **Reports prepared by degree granting institutions using institutional records**
  - » **number of transfer students who entered**
  - » **where students transferred from**
  - » **# of credits transferred**
  - » **grades in specific courses & cumulative GPA**
  - » **graduation rates; time to graduation**
  - » **comparisons with direct entry students**

Distribution of CGPA* at Graduation from SFU
B.C. College Transfers vs Direct Entry B.C. Grade 12s

- 2206 transfer students who had graduated from SFU had CGPA of 2.91
- 443 direct entry B.C. Grade 12's who had graduated had CGPA* of 3.05
- difference is 0.14 of a GPA



***CGPA = Cumulative Grade Point Average**

Student Surveys

- Surveyed thousands of former college students by telephone and identified those who transferred.

  How did we do that?

  What were their perceptions of the transfer experience?

2002 Admissions & Transfer Experiences of Students Continuing Their Studies: Findings from a College Outcomes Survey – Jean Karlinski

******9:15 am Tuesday******

Student Interviews (1997)

- **Small group discussions of student expectations and transfer experiences**
  - » **students at a college planning to transfer to a specific university**
  - » **students who already had successfully transferred from that college to that specific university**

Student Interviews (1997)

- **Key Findings:**

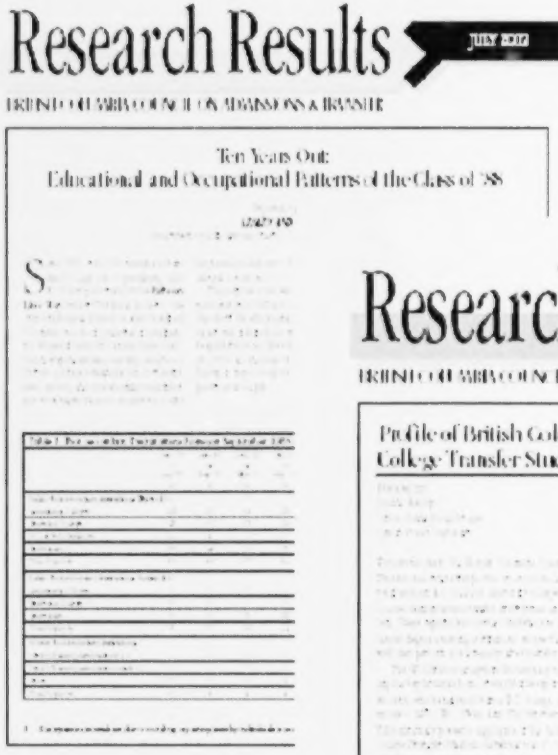
Main obstacles to successful transfer were:

1. **difficulty gaining access to useful information**
2. **difficulty understanding transfer policies, practices and procedures**
3. **declines in GPA following transfer to a university**

Transcript Assessment Studies (1998-2000)

- **Conducted by admissions office at each of our three largest universities**
  - » stratified random sample of students
  - » identified all courses not accepted for transfer
  - » calculated proportion of courses not accepted for transfer
  - » all courses not granted transfer credit were entered into a classification system that specified reasons why courses were not granted transfer credit

Communicating Research Results


Research Results

JULY 2007

BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

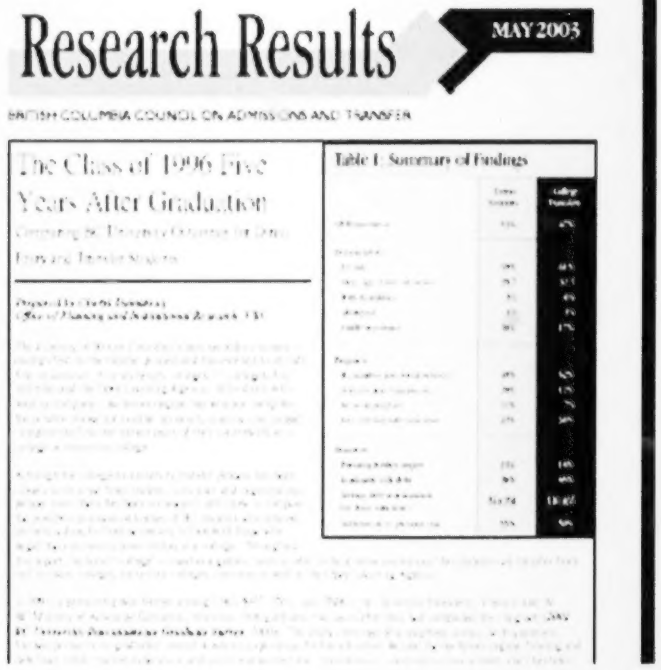
Ten Years Out:
Educational and Occupational Patterns of the Class of '88

Research Results

DECEMBER 2001

BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

Profile of British Columbia College Transfer Students


Research Results

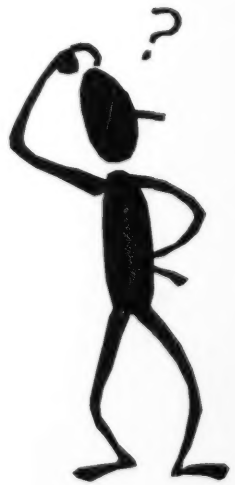
MAY 2003

BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS AND TRANSFER

The Class of 1996 Five Years After Graduation

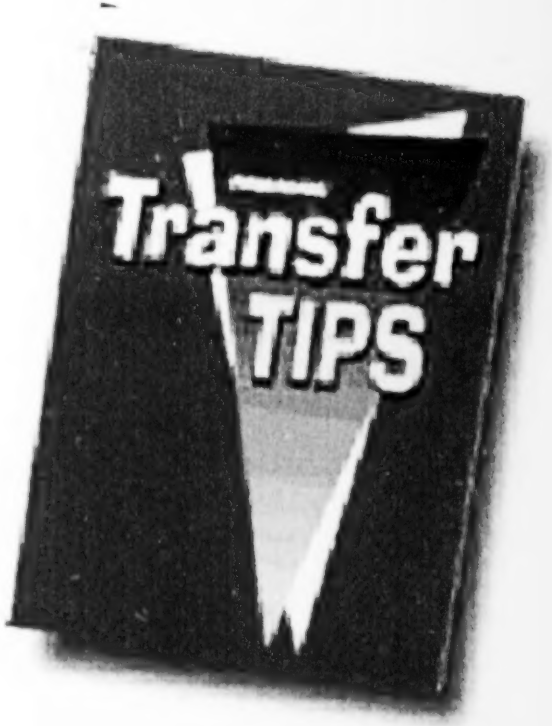
Table 1: Summary of Findings

So what did we do with all this information?



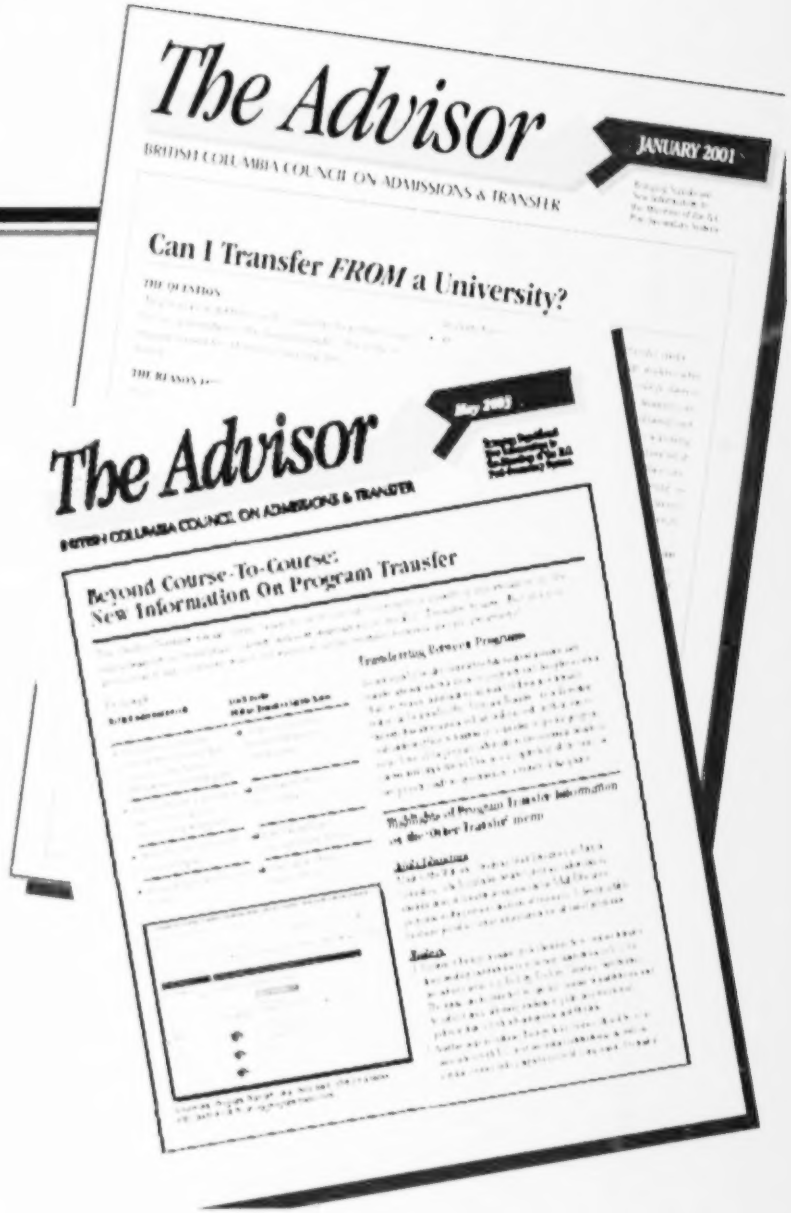
We Developed a Student Handbook

- A user-friendly student-oriented guide to transfer in B.C.
- Developed by a team of advisors, admissions officers, students
- Print and online versions, plus poster, bookmark
- 30,000+ copies distributed free to all post-secondary institutions



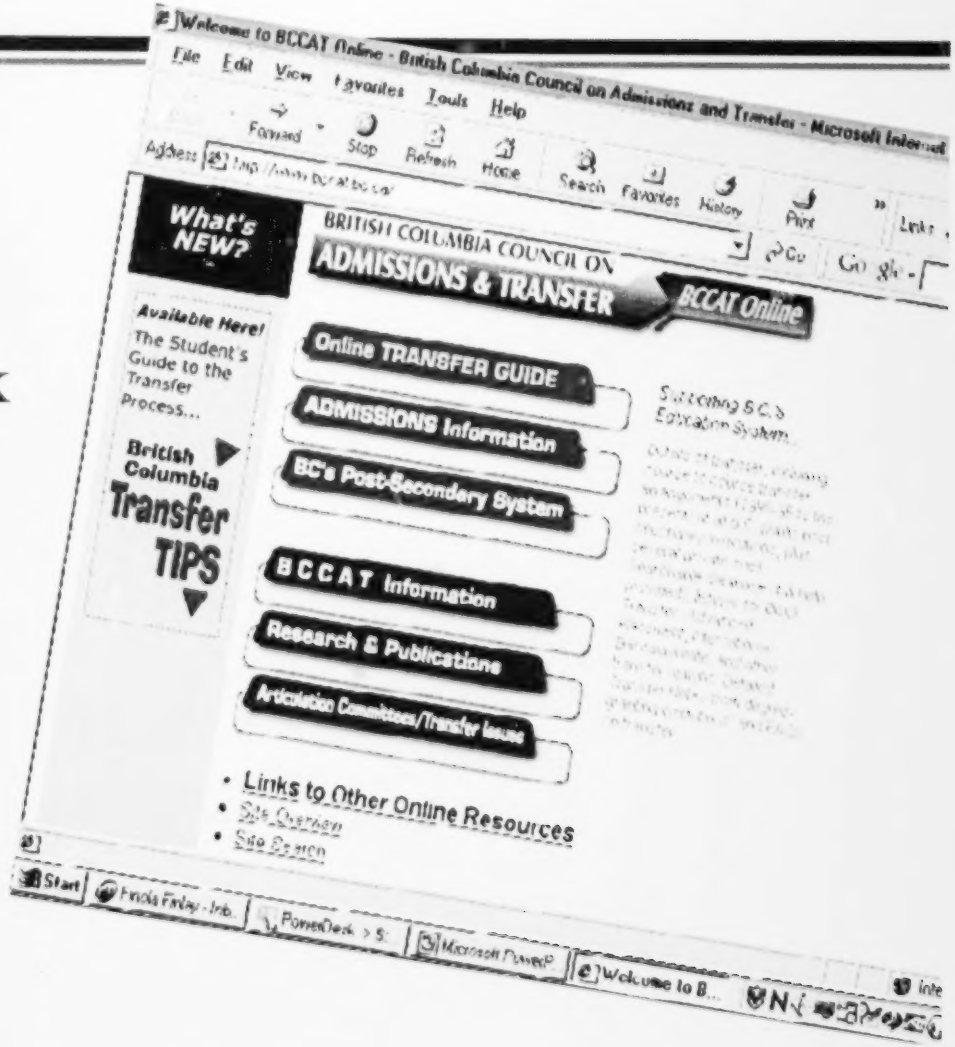
"The Advisor"

- New publication
- Targeted at students and advisors
- Focus on new information, or changes to transfer rules or pathways
- "TIPS" red



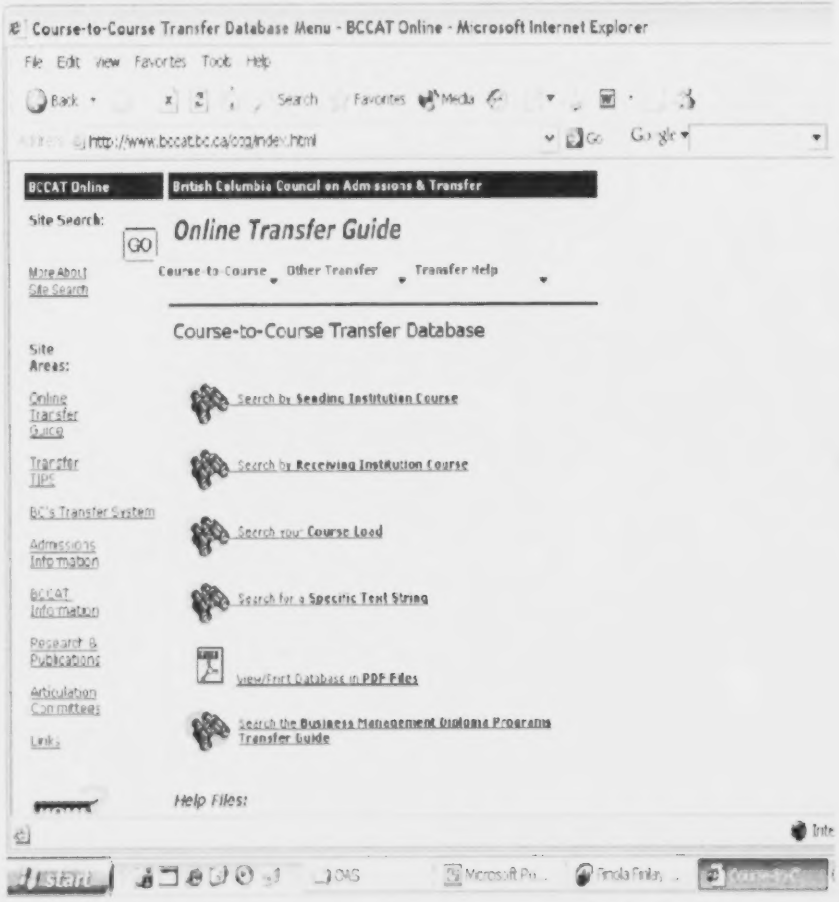
We Redesigned Our Website

- Student area
- Ease of navigation
- Prominent TIPS link
- Clean look
- One stop shopping
- Still evolving



Improved Transfer Efficiency

- Web-based Transfer Credit Request Form
  - » Overnight turnaround possible
- Transfer Guide online only
  - » Bi-weekly updates
  - » Supplemented by PDF tables
  - » Many new sections – beyond course-to-course



We Set Up a Task Force

- Task Force on **Standards and Processes**
- Mandate to examine *administrative* barriers to transfer (Vs. articulation issues)
- Emphasis on identifying and removing barriers *from the students' point of view*
- Recommendations on
  - » Recording
  - » Timing
  - » Tracking
  - » Communicating

We Worked with the Registrars

Two Committees:

1. Transcript Standards

- Based on AACRAO standards, but adapted for BC. First set of standards in Canada. Standard transcript items will help ensure equity (e.g. NGR).
- Recommended development of ***national*** transcript standards – ARUCC has now accomplished this.

2. Semester Length

- Uneven standards (e.g. dates for "W" Vs "F") created inequities and affected ability to send final transcripts.

These committees grew from recommendations made by the Task Force on Standards and Processes

We Established the Transfer Liaison Network (TLN)

- **Advisors identified the need for "a human voice" for themselves and students to talk to when difficulties arose.**
- **"Transfer Liaison Person" within each institution**
  - » **respond to inquiries**
  - » **follow up on transfer issues.**
- **BCCAT provides a listserv forum**

Rationale

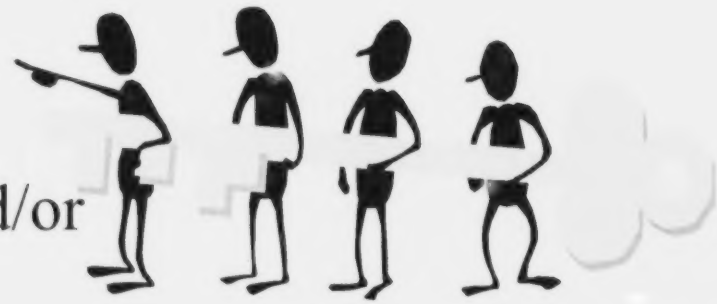
A knowledgeable person with responsibility for dealing with transfer issues can help students sort out problems and cut down on frustrations and confusions.

Redeveloped Associate Degree

- Provincial credential – associate of arts, associate of science only
- Rigorous, two years, all courses articulated
- Revised, more flexible, re-framed as transfer credential
- All degree-granting institutions now grant block transfer (60 credit guarantee) for completed B.C. associate degree
- Admission advantage

We Focussed on Articulation Relationships

- Articulation Committees – clarified roles
- Undertook "Transfer Innovations" Projects
- Over 30 Projects so far
  - » Has empowered articulation committees
  - » Resulted in many new transfer agreements and/or better information on transfer routes



We Developed New Models of Articulation and Transfer

- Block Transfer in Applied and Professional Programs
- Business Transfer Guide
  - » Second largest transfer area
  - » Peer committee evaluates equivalency
  - » No sending/receiving
- Flexible Pre-Major
- Transfer "Pathways"

Still To Do

- Implement Appeals Process
- Transfer Shock
- Admissions Issues
- Real time posting of transfer agreements
- Private/Public articulation and expanding transfer system
- Transfer issues for online courses
- Secondary to post-secondary transitions
- Communicate
- **Communicate**
- **Communicate !!!**

Resolving the Conflict – Did We Succeed?

- Less vulnerable to anecdotal record/mythology
- More efficient administrative processes
- "Block Transfer" defined and developed
- Need for course-to-course transfer appreciated
- ***Articulation Power Imbalance*** remains, but
  - » Universities more sensitive
  - » Articulation committees empowered through projects
- We *managed* it

BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON
ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER
SERVING BC's EDUCATION SYSTEM

The BC Transfer Guide, all surveys, research reports, discussion papers, handbooks, other publications and *this presentation* are available online at:

www.bccat.bc.ca

Frank Gelin, Executive Director & Co-Chair, BCCAT
email: fgelin@bccat.bc.ca

Finola Finlay, Associate Director, BCCAT
email: ffinlay@bccat.bc.ca

Jean Karlinski, Administrative Assistant, BCCAT
email: jkarlins@bccat.bc.ca